Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

Our Central American Group is certainly well served. Not only do its members receive a regular and informative Newsletter but meetings are also regularly organised on their behalf. The next one will be on Saturday February 20th at the Victory Services Club and will start as usual at 10.30 a.m. and continue until about 4 in the afternoon. It is being organised by Dr Richard Saundry who, as well as planning two talks and displays on Central America, also plans to circulate Spanish Main members in London and the Home Counties asking them to bring a page or two from their albums showing examples of overprints and surcharges from any Latin American country. He is hoping that by adding this general interest to increase the numbers who attend. Surcharges and overprints may in themselves sound a bit dull, but when you think about them the reason for overprinting is more often than not, far from clear. Many a time when viewing an exhibit, have I wanted to know more about the why and wherefore of what I am looking at. So often the write up glosses over the reason for the surcharge or overprint and gives little or no explanation.

Next, on Saturday 16th April our Editor, Michael Birks, will again be organising a meeting at the Urmston Conservative Club near Manchester. He will be circulating members with details of his plans at an early date.

Finally may I draw your attention to our translation of Señor Danilo Mueses' summary of the Seebeck story - "Seebeck, Hero or Villain". We do not plan to serialise the details of what he says on non-Central American Republics in our Newsletter; bound copies (89 pages) of his complete work are available at £5 (US$9) post free. A few complete copies are still available of this excellent and useful book which should be on the shelf of every Latin American collector. They are available from our Editor whilst stocks last.

John Fosbery
President, The Spanish Main

CONGRATULATIONS to our members who received awards at Hafnia. We have already mentioned Kilian Nathan's third Large Gold, and in addition Finn Stjernholck received a Large Vermeil, Leo (US) Harris a Vermeil, John West a Large Silver, and Richard Saundry a Silver. Well done to them all!

A PROBLEM WITH A COSTA RICAN FIRST FLIGHT COVER TO COZUMEL, MEXICO

by Richard H Saundry

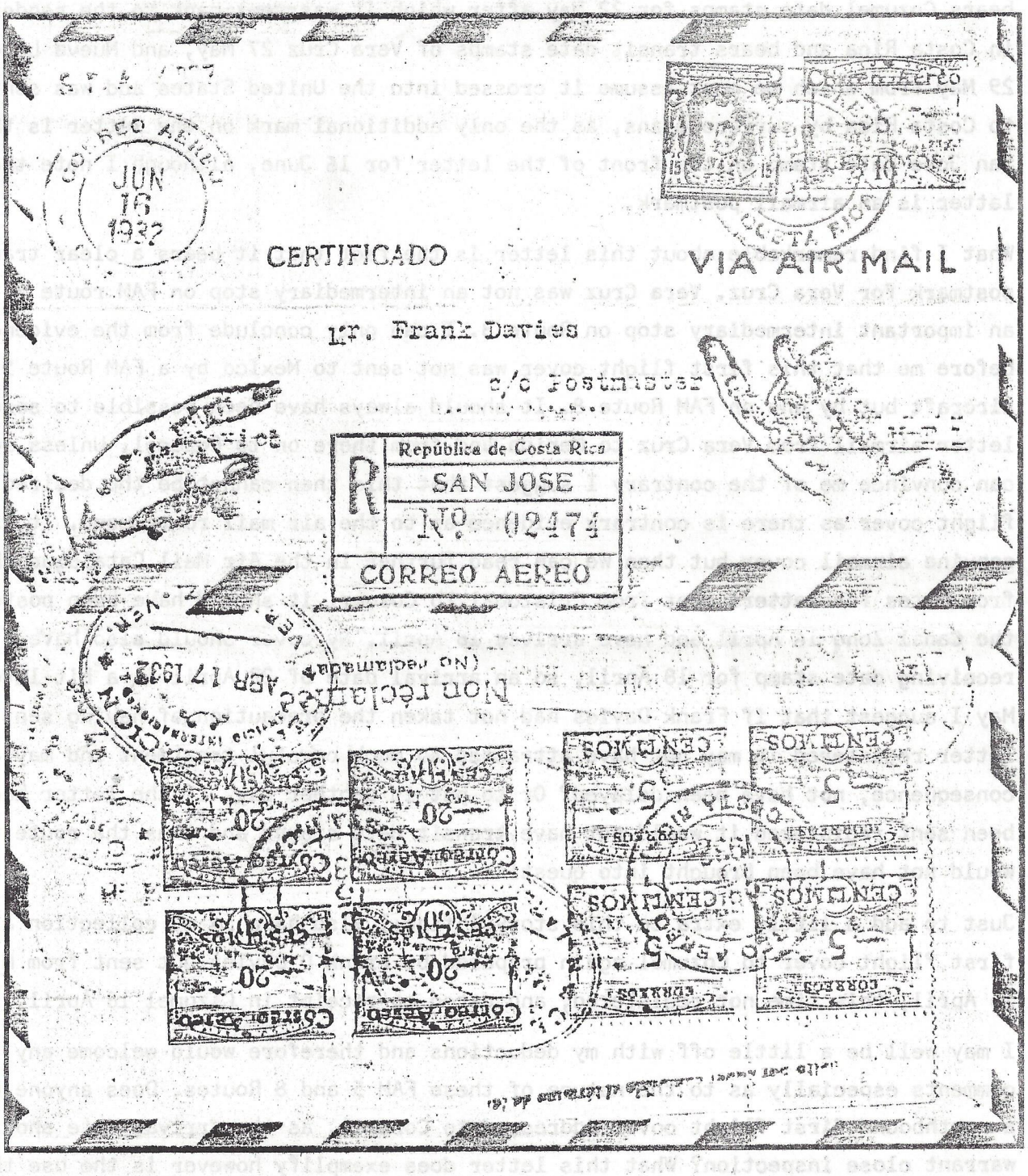
My principal collecting interest is the registration system of Costa Rica. Recently I saw advertised for sale in an auction an air mail registered letter from Costa Rica to Mexico. As the vast majority of Costa Rican registered letters sent to foreign destinations that appear on the philatelic market are addressed either to the United States or to Western Europe, the fact that this cover was addressed to another Central American Republic afforded the distinct possibility of filling a gap in my collection; an example of a difficult postal rate.

I was fortunate enough to acquire the cover which apparently was a sleeper and I suspect I was the only bidder. It was everything that it was described as being, in that the letter was sent registered airmail from Costa Rica on 15 April 1932, to Cozumel, Mexico. It bore a good example of the pink Costa Rican airmail registration label and adhesives to a total of ¢1.20. The franking is almost certainly correct, comprising 80 ctmos for the airmail rate to Mexico for a letter weighing under 15 grams - this rate was operative between 11 March 1930 and 1 October 1932. In addition to the airmail postage such letters had to have before 19 September 1932 stamps to cover the current surface rate, which since both Costa Rica and Mexico were signatories of the Postal Union of the Americas and Spain meant that they exchanged their mails at the prevailing first classs domestic rates. From 9 June 1931 the first class domestic rate in Costa Rica had been set at 10 ctmos.. The additional 30 ctmos. was to cover the domestic registration fee which also applied to letters sent to Mexico.

What makes my letter much more interesting, however, is that I find in Vol.4 of the 5th Edition of the American Airmail Catalogue under U.S. Foreign Contract Air Mail Route No.5 that on 15 April 1932 Cozumel, an island in the Caribbean off the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico was added to Route No.5. "Previous service to Cozumel had been sporadic and experimental in character and had not been performed under a firm contractual arrangement. Effective the above date regular official service was established. No special markings were employed at either Miami or Cristobal, C.Z.. (the then termini of F.A.M. Route 5) to distinguish the mail". I realised at this point that my registered air mail cover was a philatelic first flight cover from San Jose to Cozumel contrived by an American collector, a Mr Frank Davies. Costa Rica was served both by FAM Route 5 services to Miamai, and FAM Route 8 services to Brownsville, texas, flying via Mexico.

Unfortunately my cover presents a problem. Since the letter was sent registered, each time it changed hands it was recorded and date stamped. Thus we find on the reverse side of the envelope an oval registration date stamp of Vera Cruz for

THE COVER DESCRIBED IN THE ARTICLE



15 - 22 April 1932

Missent to FAM Route 8 instead of 5

Registered First Flight Cover:

San José, Costa Rica to Cozumel, Mexico

17 April, and a Cozumel receiving office date stamp of 22 April. Additional marks are really only of interest to students of Mexican postal history: - briefly the letter, being undeliverable was advertised in Cozumel in the "Lista" system and bears Cozumel date stamps for 22 May after which it was sent back to the sender in Costa Rica and bears transit date stamps of Vera Cruz 27 May, and Nueva Laredo 29 May from which we must assume it crossed into the United States and was sent to Costa Rica by surface means, as the only additional mark on the letter is the San Jose date stamp on the front of the letter for 16 June, although I note the latter is an airmail postmark.

What I find remarkable about this letter is the fact that it bears a clear transit postmark for Vera Cruz. Vera Cruz was not an intermediary stop on FAM route 5, but an important intermediary stop on Route 8. I can only conclude from the evidence before me that this first flight cover was not sent to Mexico by a FAM Route 5 aircraft but by one on FAM Route 8. It should always have been possible to send a letter airmail from Vera Cruz to Merida and from there on to Cozumel. Unless someone can convince me of the contrary I suggest that this then cannot be the desired first flight cover as there is contrary evidence as to the air mail route used. It is a genuine airmail cover but then we can read further in the Air Mail Catalogue that from dates for letters sent from Cristobal to Cozumel it should have been posted in the Canal Zone 16 April and have arrived 18 April. My cover should also have a receiving date stamp for 18 April, so an arrival date of 22 April is a bit late. May I suggest that if Frank Davies had not taken the precaution of having sent his letter registered it may not have attracted so much careful treatment and may as a consequence, not have been delayed? Or to put it another way, if the letter had not been sent registered it would not have transit date stamps and thus the route taken would not have been brought into question.

Just to add a little extra to this story I find I also have in my collection a first flight cover to Cozumel again prepared by Frank D Davies but sent from Miami 15 April, this time not registered, and dated on receipt in Cizumel 18 April.

I may well be a little off with my deductions and therefore would welcome any comments especially as to the nature of these FAM 5 and 8 Routes. Does anyone have a northbound first flight cover addressed to Cozumel, as the arrival date should warrant close inspection? What this letter does exemplify however is the use that a registered cover can be put to in order to unravel the details of a particular postal route.

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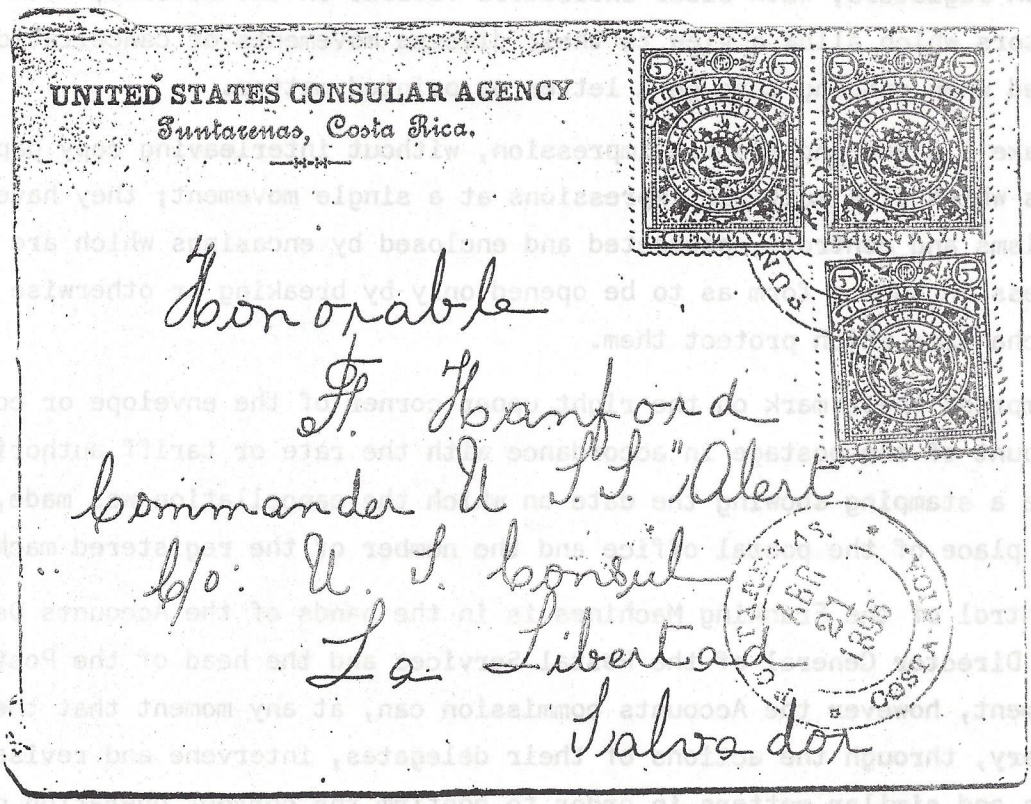
Could any body enlighten us regarding a Mr Zareski, and a Mr Darteyre? The former is probably a faker or forger, and the latter a postmark expert whose signature is to be found on the back of some stamps. Letters to the Editor please.

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF COMMANDER HANFORD

Those of you who have followed the series of covers sent to and from Commander Hanford aboard the USS Alert, will be pleased to see the two covers shown below. They were sent by Hector Mena of Baton Rouge, who adds "The registered cover seems to be overpaid, unless very heavy ..... Now you can trace the route of the USS Alert!".



(See also page 109)

GUATEMALA: POSTAL FRANKING MACHINES

In an earlier issue, Mark Spycher called for a translation of Chapter III of Barreda's work on postal franking machines. This has been undertaken by Cyril Woodtli of Manchester, and is reproduced here.

The postal office, in order to give a quicker service, gave approval and due authorisation, by means of the Government Edict of 23 September 1947, for the use in the post offices in the capital, the departmental (county) headquarters and commercial establishment, of "correspondence cancelling machines", in order to give the public the necessary and indispensable facilities for the despatch of their correspondence, in order to achieve the greatest speed in the transportation of the multitude of postal items, of varying tariffs in the quickest time, and thus offer a great benefit.

In order to achieve this an order was issued, containing in four chapters, thirty-three paragraphs with their corresponding adjuncts for the better understanding and development of their working, and these have been immediately installed in various parts of the country.

These machines are constructed of steel, bronze, aluminium or resistant metal, presenting a solid base, being of rigid formation and sure protection for all its mechanisms, resistant to rust and any other form of damage to its function.

They are provided with counting mechanisms, having gears similar to calculators and cash registers, with clear indicators visible on the outside, with glass protectors which allow a view to their diverse movements or cancellations as effected when passing through a letter or printed matter.

They make a clear and legible impression, without interleaving copy paper or ink ribbons which give multiple impressions at a single movement; they have counting mechanisms and controls, protected and enclosed by encasings which are resistant to access in such a form as to be opened only by breaking or otherwise violating the mechanisms which protect them.

They impress their mark on the right upper corner of the envelope or cover with the amount of the postage in accordance with the rate or tariff authorised, and include a stamping showing the date on which the cancellation was made, the name of the place of the postal office and the number of the registered machine.

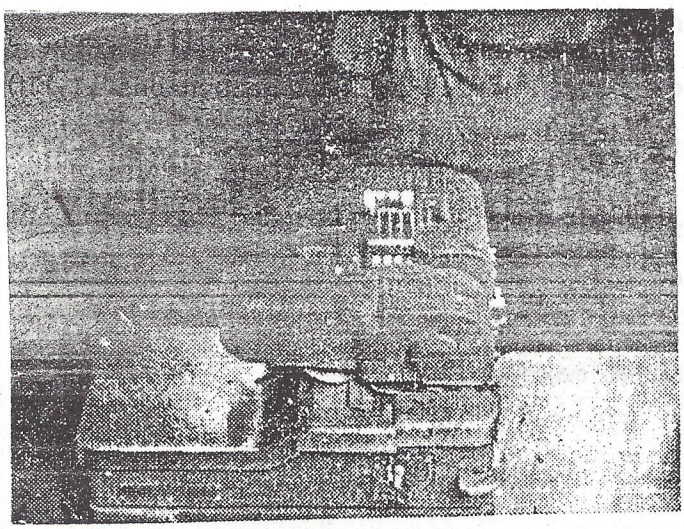
The control of the Franking Machines is in the hands of the Accounts Department of the Director General of the Postal Services and the head of the Postal Department, however the Accounts commission can, at any moment that they deem necessary, through the actions of their delegates, intervene and revise the charges and similar matters in order to confirm the correct operation of the

exercise. This can be effected in spite of the usual monthly revision carried out by the Accounts Department.

These machines do not interfere with the use of postage stamps when circumstances so require, seeing that the public can use either system for the cancellation of their mail. The marks "Universal" and "Pitney Bowes" are American, seeing that the majority of the former actually in service are: the property of private or commercial owners in the Capital - 60; private or commercial owners in the principal counties - 7; machines in use in the postal centres - 7; machines in use in branch post-offices in Quezaltenango, Puerto Barrios, Mazatenango, Antigua, Chiquimula, Zacapa, Coban, Jutiapa, Huehuetenango, Peten, Retalhuleu, Escuintla - 12, making a total of 86 (1954).

These machines were manufactured in Stanford, Connecticut, USA, and bear the principal characteristics in that they are electrical and do not therefore tire out the operative; stamp and mark the correspondence at one operation; cancel 175 letters per minute; stamp out any value, that is to say, from half a cent to nine quetzals, ninety-nine and a half centavos; cancellations for every type of package, including letters, parcels ordinary or airmail, immediate delivery, postal package etc.. There is no possibility of lost stamps, and so the postal operator cannot have any differences when balancing up his cash. As the cash operations are automatic the operator can immediately tell his balances and check his cash, thus saving much time in these matters, and finally as these matters are effected in ink give a neat and visible impression of great durability.

Furthermore, another big advantage is that in addition to the great advance in this system, by just the turn of a key, a ribbon projects stamps which can be applied to parcels, and packages, with the gum already humidified ready for sticking on the package, possessing also automatic controls for the counter, with containers for cents etc..



One of the franking machines authorised by the Government decree of 23 September 1947

EL SALVADOR POSTAGE DUES 1895-1900

by N BRUCKHEIMER

In my reference collection of El Salvador forgeries, the postage dues of the late 19th century are extensively represented and have provided the following additional information (in the remarks below my use of the word "genuine" refers to both originals and reprints and the word "forgery" refers soley to the counterfeits).

Most of the single items in the collection are unused, and all without gum. The examples I have which are additional to Russel Haydon's listing (Issue 24) are mostly "used", namely:

	olive	5c
	red	10c, 50c
	violet	1c
	orange	50c
and unused	orange	3c, 15c

However also present in the new collection were several complete sheets of 60 (10 x 6) with selvedge all the way round, again without gum. The sheets present were:

olive	50c
red	1c, 2c, 5c, 10c
blue	2c, 10c (half sheet)
violet	1c, 3c, 10c, 25c
orange	3c

Apart from the obvious differences between engraved and lithographed stamps, a study of the sheets has shown the following common factors in every value of every colour of the forgery:

1) The forgery is based on stamp No.10 of the left upper pane of 25 of the original (the only complete pane I have for comparison) where the lowest point of the "V" of "SALVADOR" is foreshortened on that particular genuine stamp.

2) It appears that the forger set up a block of four which was then transferred to the printing plate five times along the top section of the sheet and then repeated entirely twice again to complete the sheet of sixty. This can be verified by the position of stamp No.4 in each block in relation to the other three stamps and by the level of each block of four to the next. Every denomination shows this sheet make-up.

3) The height of the forgery appears to be the same as the genuine but the width of the forgery is noticeably narrower than the genuine stamp. Nevertheless the sheet size of the forgery is substantially larger because the forgery has much wider margins than the genuine (ie a block of twenty-five of the forgeries is considerably larger than a complete pane of the genuine stamps.

A summary of the forgeries known to exist is now as follows:

olive	all except 10c, 15c and 25c
red	all except 3c
blue	all except 5c
violet	all except 15c
orange	3c, 15c and 50c

I still believe that forgeries of all values in all colours will exist. Unfortunately I can offer no assistance as to the origin of these forgeries, which are, I believe, the only examples of counterfeits of Seebeck issues of any country. It is possible they were produced for promotional or packet purposes.

Comments, or additions to the above list are welcome, via the Editor.

HAITI: USS ALERT

Henry Madden of New York would like to solicit readers' opinions on the cover shown below. It is endorsed "Alert" in manuscript, and he would be interested to know if it is possible is this cover was carried by the same USS Alert mentioned elsewhere in this, and previous issues.

POSTAL DEVELOPMENT OF GUATEMALA IN 1880

by Mrs Cécile Gruson

Less than ten years after introducing postage stamps, Guatemala's postal organisation was progressing at a very fast pace. The 26 post offices extant in 1871 (marked with *) had more than doubled. The following list - which is probably incomplete - is of offices confirmed by the data of 1880 census or letters. Where known, the date of opening is indicated for the offices established after 1871.

Post and Telegraph Offices

a) With DAILY mail departures: Guatemala*, Villa Nueva (1873), Amatitlan*, Escuintla*, Antigua*, Palin, S. José*.

b) With THREE mails weekly: Quezaltenango*, Chingo (1877), Malacatan, Patzun.

c) With TWO mails weekly: Coatepeque, Coban*, Cuyotenango (1873), Champerico*, Chichicastenango, Chimaltenango*, Chiquimula*, Cuilapa*, Esquipulas*, Gualan*, Huehuetenango*, Izabal*, Jalapa (1873), Jutiapa*, Mazatenango*, Ostuncalco (1873), Retalhuleu*, Salama*, S. Cristobal Verapaz (1875), Sta. Cruz Quiché (1872), Sololá*, Tecpan, Totonicapan*, S. Marcos*, Zacapa*.

d) With ONE mail weekly: Cuilco, Chiantla, Chiquimulilla, Mataquesquintla, Patulul, Sacapulas, St. Lucia Cotzumalguapa.

Post Only Offices

a) With TWO mails weekly: Pto. Sto. Tomas*, S. Felipe R.*, Livingston, S. Lucas Toliman, Senahu, El Rodeo.

b) With ONE mail weekly: Peten* (Flores, then La Libertad), S. Ygnacio las Flores (1873, also called Las Marias, now Colomba), Jalpatagua, Chisec.

c) With TWO mails monthly: Panzos.

d) UNSPECIFIED frequency: Guastatoya (probably weekly).

Telegraph Only Offices

Nenton, S. Francisco Zapotitlan, S. Pablo (S.M.)

A hundred and thiry other places had a regular mail service to the department capital, but no post office. Mail was conveyed by the "Cordillera" system: under the responsibility of village authorities, couriers on foot were sent with mail from one village to the next, and such mail travelled quite fast. Some of these places do not have postal facilities even today. The mail departures ranged from daily, mostly from villages around the capital and larger towns and on the few main roads in 10% of places, two or three times weekly in 9% of localities, weekly in 28% of them, twice monthly in 20% of them, monthly in 24% of them, the frequency being unspecified for the remaining 9%.

Correspondence on any aspect of this article is welcomed, via the Editor.

NICARAGUA

Following Kilian Nathan's article, "Nicaragua: An Earlier US Intervention", (Issue No.25) and Leo Malz's response "US in Ecuador, Nicaragua and Panama" (Issue No.26), Sr Fernando Grijalva G of Glendale, sends us a detailed description of the fascinating events which formed the background to the deployment of the USS Alert.

NICARAGUA: THE REVOLUTION OF 1896

In 1893, Jose Santos Zelaya led a revolution that ended with the overthrow of the Conservative President Joaquin Zavala, and on 15 September, Zelaya was elected provisional President of Nicaragua for a term of four years. During the same year, on 10 December, a new constitution made the president ineligible for re-election.

In early February 1896, near the end of his term, Zelaya decided to remain in office for a further term. It became evident to leading members of his Liberal party, that he was planning to perpetuate his power.

Dr Francisco Baca, who was the Vice-President, resigned his office and fled to Leon, where he declared himself legitimate President of Nicaragua. His example was followed by Dr Jose Madriz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and by General Anastasio Ortiz, the Minister of War. Some time later, a large number of the members of the Assembly, who were Liberals in ideology also identified themselves with the new movement and fled to Leon to support Dr Baca.

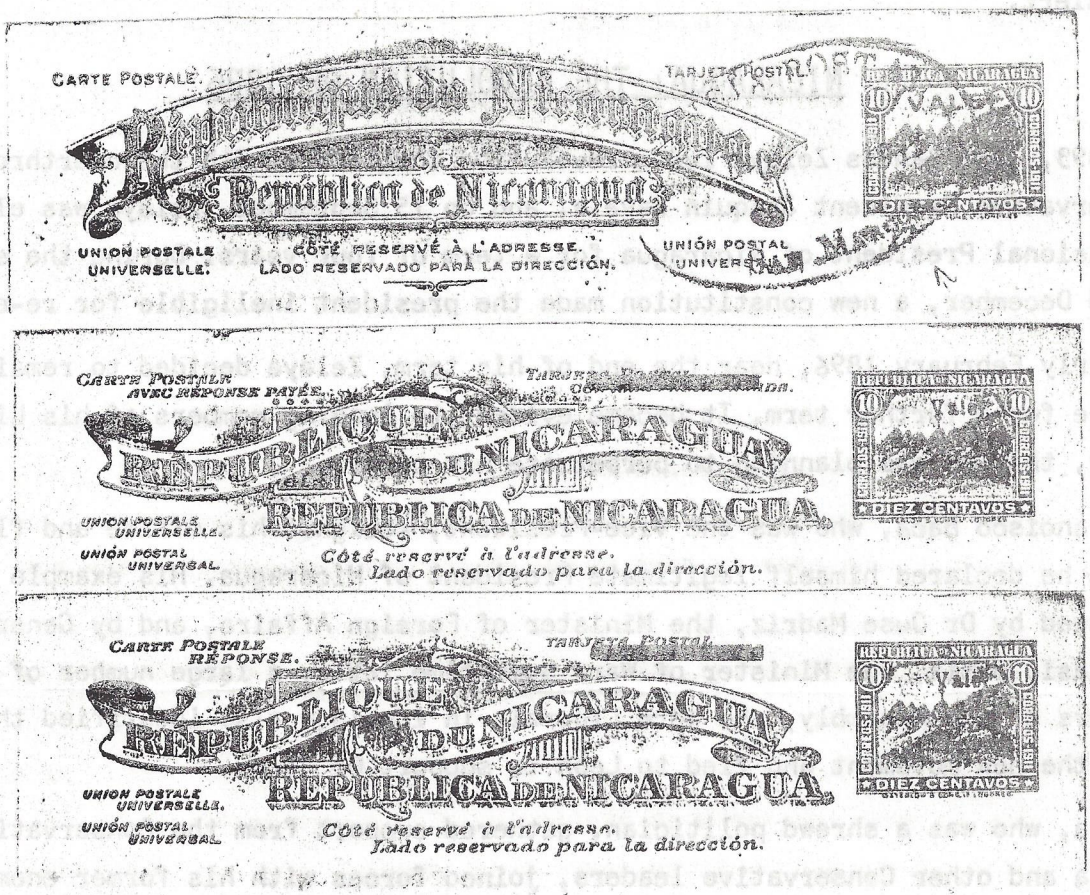
Zelaya, who was a shrewd politician, gathered support from the Conservative party. Zavala and other Conservative leaders, joined forces with his former enemy to suppress the Liberal revolution. This seems contradictory, but the Conservatives were primarily driven by a sentiment of revenge against their rival city of Leon, stronghold of the Liberal political opposition.

The rebels were defeated in several engagements. The government forces kept a purely defensive attitude and it was not until the end of April that government forces had broken the rebellion in Leon. Some rebel forces resisted and were pushed towards Corinto. While the fighting was nearing the city of Corinto, the local United States consular agent ordered the USS ALERT to anchor at Corinto in order to protect American citizens and their holdings. From 2 to 4 May, a force of 15 Marines under 1st Sergeant Frederick W M Poppe, and 19 seamen were landed. Fighting never took place in the city because the government promised to guarantee the safety of American citizens.

Once Zelaya had control of the situation, he got rid of the Conservatives and forced leaders of the revolt into exile. He remained in office until 1909, by constantly reforming the constitution.

NICARAGUA

Following Denis Kilner's article on the postal stationery of Nicaragua, and his comment that he had not seen an example of H&G 73 (page 94) Kilian Nathan of Zurich sends us photocopies of the one cent surcharge on postcard, and both sides of the reply card (illustrated) and one of the reply card used.



Sr Fernando Grijalva G writes "Last year, at a stamp exhibition, I bought a die of the 5 centavos stamp of 1893. The dimensions are larger than the original stamp. I enclose an impression as a sample and hope that perhaps a fellow collector can shed light on the origin of this die.

Denis Kilner you may remember, produced a rate table for the postal services of Nicaragua from 1862 up to 1913, (Issue No.26, page 60). I am pleased to hear that he wishes to extend this table, but he has run into difficulties. He writes "The only area where there is no solid information is in the internal registered mail - they seem to be extremely scarce."

If you have any internal registered covers, and would be willing to photocopy them, or send details of weight and rate, I shall be pleased to pass these on to Denis.

Third Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1892. These have a different overprint colour, namely dark blue, (Figure 40, type 0-3). The values are the same as those for the 3rd issue of ordinary stamps, but all values are of the same brownish yellow colour.

The 2c and 1 peso stamps are known without overprint but these are considered

Fourth Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1893 using the design of the fourth issue of ordinary stamps but all the values are in the same slate grey colour.

The inscription used in the overprint differs from the previous ones and is red in colour (Figure 40, type 0-4). The 2c, 5c, 10c, 50c and 5 pesos stamps are known without the overprint. Also a 25c stamp in black exists. It is believed that all are of dubious origin and that none were authorised for postal use.

Fifth Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1894. Orange-yellow in colour and the design similar to the 5th isue of ordinary stamps, the overprint is that used on the 3rd issue ((Figure 40, type 0-3) but in black.

Sixth Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1895 using the same design as that of the 6th issue of ordinary stamps but all green in colour. These were issued on both watermarked and plain paper. Reprints were made of both types.

Although these stamps were circulated in January 1895, at the end of that year a new issue was made on watermarked paper bearing the phrygian cap watermark which later became famous.

It was in this issue that watermarked paper was first used, and which became very much used during the rest of the Seeebck contract.

The overprint is the same as that used in the previous issue, but in blue.

In this issue, the only genuine stamps are those issued and printed on unwatermarked paper. It is believed that the stamps on watermarked paper were printed at the end of 1895 as a reserve and were probably never sent to Managua.

Seventh Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1896 with the same design as that used on the ordinary stamps on that date. Printed on watermarked paper and also without watermark. The overprint was of the inscription "Franqueo Oficial" (Figure 40, Type 0-6).

Eighth Issue

These were issued overprinted by hand (apparently locally) on postage due stamps circulated on 1st January 1896. The overprint was as Figure 40, type 0-5, in violet ink on both watermarked and nwatermarked paper.

Ninth Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1897 in the form and design of the 8th issue, but all the values are in red and the overprint is as Figure 40, type 0-6. These are known on both watermarked and unwatermarked paper. Reprints of these stamps were made.

Tenth Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1898 using the overprint as Figure 40, type 0-6 in blue. The stamps are carmine in colour. They correspond to the 9th postal issue circulated on this same date.

Reprints were made on both watermarked and unwatermarked paper. The paper of the unwatermarked reprints is thicker and the gum more yellow.

Eleventh Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1899 using stamps similar to the 10th postal issue, (in the original colours) and overprinted in an elegant form (Figure 40, type O-7), with the inscription "Franqueo Oficial".

POSTAGE DUE ISSUES

During the Seebeck contract, 41 stamps were issued for postage due purposes, distributed in four colours, as follows:

First Issue

Circulated on 1st January 1896. The design consists of a numeral value on a handsome turned background. The issue comprises seven values on unwatermarked paper and also similar values on watermarked paper. All are in orange and the values are 1c, 2c, 5c, 10c, 20c, 30c and 50c.

Figure 40 Nicaraguan Postage Due Stamps. The lefthand design relates to the first two and the righthand side to the last two issues.

Second Issue

On 1st January 1897 a second issue on both watermarked and unwatermarked paper was released, using the same design as for the previous issue but changing the colour to violet, the values being similar.

Reprints were made of this second issue, as with the previous one, with slightly different shades.

Third Issue

In 1898 a third issue of postage due stamps was released, using a similar design to that of the two previous ones but having the inscription "Republica de Nicaragua" changed to "Estado de Nicaragua". They maintained the same seven values but the colour was changed to greenish blue. The printing was by lithography.

Fourth Issue

On 1st January a new issue was released using the same design as for the previous one. The colour was changed to carmine and for this series the 30c stamp was left out.

OFFICIAL POSTAGE DUE STAMPS

Among the postage due stamps one should mention a provisional issue which consisted of five values (1c to 20c) of the 1896 series and these carry an overprint in two lines of italic letters "FRANQUEO OFICIAL". These are known on both unwatermarked and watermarked paper. The overprint was made by hand, possibly in sheets of 25 stamps.

TELEGRAPH STAMPS

Between 1891 and 1899 Seebeck printed a total of 66 stamps for the Telegraph service, using the same designs as for the ordinary stamps but varying the colours, and the stamps bear an overprint "TELEGRAFO" or "TELEGRAFOS" in different typesets. Some of these are surcharged with new values. Some telegraph stamps have been reported as having been used postally.

ENVELOPES, WRAPPERS & POSTCARDS

No records are available of the numbers of these items which Seebeck printed for Nicaragua. Information, which is incomplete up to 1896 included, indicates that he submitted:

35 envelopes
21 wrappers for newspapers
28 postcards

Reprints and paper varieties

In recent times we have noticed a resurgence of interest in philatelic circles, in the Seebeck issues. In part, this interest is due to the studies made of the various printings and reprints made, varieties of paper used etc.. These are however very specialised studies which fall beyond the scope of this book. We will however return to this subject in more detail in Chapter XI, for those interested in the many details of paper, printings, reprints etc. we recommend them to the article "Nicaragua, The Seebeck issues" by Albert Quast & Dr Robert Willer, published in "The Collector Club Philatelist", Vol 46, No.6, November 1967 to Vol 47, No.4, July 1968. This is without doubt the most complete study made on the subject of Seebeck and Nicaragua. Much of their information about papers, reprints, etc. is valid in the study of Seebeck issues for other countries.

FINALLY

Nicaragua and Salvador, differing from Honduras and Ecuador, respected their contracts and they did not terminate them until the end of the ten years.

In spite of the scandal which was raised, Nicaragua took advantage of obtaining her stamps free and once the contract with Seebeck was completed, they signed a similar one with Dr Maximo Asenjo.

Chapter VIII

ECUADOR

More than a year passed betweeen the signing of the contract between Mr Seebeck with Nicaragua and the signing of the contract by Mr Henry N Etheridge and the Government of Ecuador. Why were the contracts with El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras signed at short intervals of a few weeks of each other and yet more than a year transpired before the signing of a new contract? Why were the first contracts signed by Seebeck and this one signed by Etheridge? Who was Etheridge?

These are valid questions with which to commence the study of Seebeck stamps of Ecuador.

Mr Henry N Etheridge, who arrived in Quito in 1890, was an English agent who worked for Waterlow & Sons. He was however more like what the English call a "Carpet bagger", a kind of adventurer and apparently, as we shall see from the text of the contract, he appeared as having made personal negotiations based on his relations with Waterlow & Sons. It is not clear why, Etheridge being the agent for Waterlow & Sons, the contract should have come into the hands of Seebeck.

It has been maintained (in Mainsheet XVIII, January 1980) that Etheridge only offered the contract to Seebeck after Waterlow & Sons and the American Bank Note Co. had not shown any interest in it, but several publications of the time affirm that Etheridge was a representative of Seebeck and that he negotiated the contract in his name.

The contract was signed on 16th October 1890 and was approved by the President of Ecuador on 27th October of the same year, in the following manner:

CONTRACT WITH Mr H N ETHERIDGE FOR
THE PRINTING OF STAMPS

The Director General of Postal Affairs who is specifically commissioned to represent the Government of Ecuador on the one hand, and for the other party Henry N Etheridge, being a person of age and an English subject, having convened the following:

1 - The above mentioned Mr Etheridge undertakes to supply, without cost whatever to the Government, all the items required for the postage of correspondence and telegraphs of the nation to the following amounts:

Adhesive stamps of every denomination and value (two million); stamped envelopes (125,000); postcards (75,000); stamped wrappers (25,000).

2 - The Government will change on 1st January 1892 and therefrom every year or half-year, as it shall deem necessary, the series of postage stamps and telegraph stamps, declaring without use or value the items of the previous year or semester, and they will put into circulation the new issue for the corresponding year or semester, as provided for in the contract.

3 - The items of each year or semester shall all be equal in so far as the engraving and inscriptions are concerned, but they shall be different in colour according to value, and they shall differ in some essential detail from the previous issues beside the year or semester.

4 - The stamps shall be engraved on steel plates. The artistic work and the materials used shall be of first class quality.

5 - On signing the contract, the Government will deliver to Mr Etheridge an order for all the items which will be required for the 1892 issue, indicating the numbers and colours of each, and the sizes, forms, designs, photos, inscriptions or engravings which they shall have, at the Government's wishes.

6 - On 1st November of the following year, at the latest, Mr Etheridge will deliver to the Agent whom the Government will nominate abroad, the items indicated in the order, perfectly finished and ready for circulation, well packed and ready for shipment. Furthermore he will receive, on the Government's behalf, who will guarantee its perfect conservation, the plates which have been used for the printing of the new issues, and the same agent will be allowed to inspect the issues during the course of the proceedings.

7 - In the succeeding years or semesters, the Government will send, before the 1st April to Mr Etheridge, or his representative in Guayaquil, an order similar to that mentioned in Article 5 for the items required for the next period; and Mr Etheridge will deliver them, as outlined in Article 6 before 1st November following;